No. 53

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

"Under no circumstances are you to meddle with this nasty affair. I forbid you to go near Betty or Bob. They have both broken the law and they must take what is coming to them."

R. of M. G., No. 53.

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AS THE afternoon passed, Bob Harding saw that he would be busy until late. He ate his evening meal in a nearby restaurant. He decided to call up Betty and tell her that he would not be home until about ten o'clock.

He gave the operator the number and waited. He could hear distinctly how the bell was being rung on the other end of the line. But Betty did not answer. Puzzled, he glanced at his watch.

It was just ten minutes past six. Betty must be home. She always ate her dinner at this hour, and after that passed the time reading until he came.

Somewhat disturbed, Bob continued to wait. Finally the telephone operator's voice said sweetly:

"The party doesn't answer."

"Alright," grumbled Bob, and hung up the receiver.

Perplexed and also worried, he tried vainly to get interested in the work still to be done at his office.

There must be a reason for his lovely young wife being away from home at this hour. So far as he knew it had never happened before.

By eight o'clock he found himself utterly unable to stand it any longer. He grabbed his coat and hat and made a dash for the door.

Because of the rigid economy he practiced, he had no car of his own. The distance to his home was a good twenty minute walk and he set out at a brisk pace.

When he finally was within sight of the flat building in which he lived, he looked up at the window.

The bright light which usually greeted him was missing.

"That's strange," he muttered, and fairly raced up the stairs. "Betty must have gone out."

While he fumbled in his pocket for the latchkey

all kinds of ideas flashed through his mind. Perhaps Betty had gone to a movie with one of the neighbors.

As he threw open the door and switched on the light, he noticed a letter lying on the floor.

It had evidently been shoved in through the crevice under the door. With a hasty motion he snatched it up. The envelope bore no address.

With trembling hands he extracted the folded sheet of paper. His breath came whistling through his teeth as he read:

Mr. Harding:

It is only right that you should know about the deception your pretty wife is practising. For some time she has been on terms of intimacy with a very rich man by the name of Fredericks. He is the man who so kindly put you in business.

She has been seen with him several times in a restaurant, and twice she went to his home alone. You can figure this out for yourself.

When a beautiful young woman suddenly becomes friendly with a man of Mr. Fredericks' type, there is usually a good reason for it.

If you doubt this, I suggest that you go to the Fredericks mansion on Michigan Boulevard as soon as you have finished reading this letter. What you'll find there will serve to convince you.

A Friend.

For a long time Harding stood as if frozen to stone. He still stared at the type-written words which

were dancing before his horror-struck eyes. Finally a great sob burst from his lips.

"My God!" he moaned. "My God!"

He could not think, for his brain had become a maddened pool of suspicion. With a savage cry he crushed the letter and shoved it in his pocket.

"I must know the truth!" he grasped. "I must!"

He ran from the room, forgetting to close the door. Down the stairs he leaped like a man possessed of a thousand furies.

With the cold sweat on his brow he set out for the Fredericks mansion.

By the time he reached the Fredericks mansion he was completely out of breath. For a few minutes he leaned against the tall iron gate through which he must pass, swaying dizzily.

A single glance upward told him that Mr. Fredericks was entertaining someone, for nearly every window along the front of the house showed light.

With his hands clenched he approached the massive front entrance. His first ring brought no response.

His second, and much longer, brought the multi-millionaire's Japanese valet to the door.

"I want to see Mr. Fredericks," Bob said in a low voice. "Is he in?"

"Have you an appointment with him?" the dapper little Jap asked.

"I want to know if he is in!" the other cried, steel in his voice now. "And you better answer my question damned quick or I'll break your neck!"

The valet, frightened at the expression on the caller's face, and fearing bodily harm, withdrew hastily and attempted to close the door.

But he was not successful in this, for the enraged Harding swiftly wedged his foot in between and a short

struggle for the possession of the door began.

It was forced open with a sudden jerk, and the little Jap found himself flung to the floor with a force that stunned him.

Bob stalked past the figure on the floor and headed straight for the door which led to the reception room.

As he entered, Mr. Fredericks stepped in through another door.

The latter showed unmistakable traces of excitement. His appearance indicated that he had been in a struggle.

His hair was disheveled and the white collar, slightly wilted, showed finger marks. Straightening up his necktie, he approached the intruder.

"Hello, Bob!" he cried nonchalantly. "What brings you here at this hour. You look worried."

"Where is my wife?" Harding demanded.

"Your wife?" Fredericks uttered a short laugh. "Why, my dear boy. What a question to ask me. I have not the faintest idea. Surely you did not expect to find her here, did you?"

Bob drew himself up and measured his silent partner coldly.

"Are you lying to me?" he demanded in a menacing tone.

"Most certainly not," came back promptly.

During the moment of intense silence which ensued, Harding's eyes roved about the room. Suddenly his tall frame stiffened.

Lying on a chinz-covered lounge he saw a hat and coat he recognized instantly as being his wife's property.

So Betty was here after all, and Fredericks had lied to protect her.

"What's this?" he cried, dashing over to pick up the coat.

Fredericks evidently knew that he was cornered. But his air of self-assurance refused to leave him.

"I suppose I'll have to confess now," he said with a little laugh. "Your wife did me the honor of having dinner with me this evening. There were a number of other guests, of course. Mrs. Brockman offered to take your wife home, and in her hurry she must have forgotten her hat and coat."

"A likely tale," Bob said with ominous quietness. "But it don't stick with me. Betty is still here and you know it."

The sound of a suppressed sob came from somewhere.

"Damn you!" snarled Bob. "Where is she?"

At this juncture the Jap valet came in and took a position behind the intruder. His attempt to pin Harding's arms met with quick failure.

The latter shook the valet off and then seized him by the nape of the neck. It was the work of a few seconds to drag him over to the door of a closet, throw him in and turn the key in the lock.

"See here!" Fredericks thundered. "I have stood enough from you. I tried to explain, but you won't listen. Now get out before I call the police and have you arrested and put in jail."

"Go ahead and call them," Bob dared.

The multi-millionaire ran toward the phone, but before he could lift the receiver from the hook, the other had jerked the connecting wire loose from the wall and torn it apart.

"Now then, you and I can come to an understanding without danger of being interrupted," the visitor said coldly. "Sit down!"

Fredericks sat down, watching Harding closely.

"I am on to you, you damned old skunk," Bob be-

gan. "I know what has been going on. And I know, too, why you were so anxious to back me financially. But I did not think you were low enough to take advantage of a woman in such a filthy manner.

"My wife is here, and she came of her own free will. Well, you can keep her. I don't want her back knowing what she is to you now. But you won't get out of this as easy as you expect. I'll put a mark on you, believe me."

The wealthy man's face had turned white. His unsteady eyes wandered toward the door which led to an adjoining room.

He rose and made a move in that direction, but did not take more than two steps.

"Don't go in there," Harding advised, his lips drawn straight across his teeth. "That is where you keep your gun. You are safer without it, for I might be tempted to take it away from you and kill you with it. God knows you deserve to be killed."

Fredericks jerked his arm loose from the other's grasp. He was not the kind of a man to show the white feather in his own home.

He realized that he was no match for Harding in a physical combat.

For a moment he thought no longer of the trembling little woman who sobbed quietly in the adjoining room. Women were all such fools.

They wanted favors for themselves or for their husbands without paying for them.

His first thought was that of self-preservation. If his valet were not locked in that closet, or if the police could be summoned, the nasty affair would be settled in a few minutes.

But as it was he had to face this young maniac alone. He edged toward the pedestal which supported

a heavy Rookwood vase.

With lightning swiftness he hurled it at Harding's head. The missile failed to hit the mark aimed for, and crashed to bits on the floor.

Like a tiger, Bob leaped. His first blow, coming straight from the shoulder, caught his antagonist on the side of the head and sent him sprawling.

With an oath Fredericks regained his feet. In spite of his age he had not forgotten his boxing lessons.

And he was by no means a weak man. The fight which followed was not a pretty spectacle to behold.

Bob Harding fought like a demon. He took everything his adversary could give, and merely shook his head. The end came suddenly.

A well directed smash on the point of the jaw brought the older man's utter collapse. But the victor, still wild with rage, did not stop.

Although lying prostrate, Fredericks' face was being pounded to a pulp. And finally, exhausted, the victor desisted.

During the melee he had not noticed that the little Jap had succeeded in liberating himself. With the agility of a cat, the valet ran from the room. His sole hope lay in finding a policeman before his master was killed.

And so it happened that as Bob wiped the blood from his knuckles, a stalwart guardian of the law rushed in.

"What's the trouble here?" the officer demanded.

"No trouble at all," Bob replied, throwing a glance at the quiet form on the floor. "I just gave him a good beating."

"What for?"

"My wife is somewhere in this house," was the answer in a tone no longer harsh with anger. It was filled with pain. "Help me find her, officer, and then you

can arrest me if you want to."

It was not necessary to search for Betty. She staggered in, her hair disheveled and her lovely face streaked with tears.

"Bob—Bob!" she shrieked. "Oh, what have you done!"

She made an attempt to reach her husband, but he waved her away with a gesture of contempt.

"Don't you touch me!" he warned.

"Please let me explain!" she begged pitifully. "I am innocent. I swear I am innocent. You must believe me, Bob. You must!"

The officer surmised instantly what had taken place. This thing would bring about a pretty scandal unless it was hushed up.

Mr. Fredericks was one of the richest and most influential men in Chicago. No doubt he would want to keep this affair from the outside world.

But Mr. Fredericks was still lying on the floor, unconscious and bleeding profusely.

The officer looked him over carefully. Suddenly he was startled to notice that the injured man had apparently quit breathing.

"I'll have to arrest you, young fellow," he said, turning to Bob. "I am afraid you have killed the old chap."

Betty uttered a low wail and slipped to the floor, senseless. Bob Harding submitted to arrest meekly and without looking at his wife.

Within fifteen minutes the room was filled almost with police officers, reporters and curious neighbors.

The young Mrs. Harding, still too dazed to make a coherent statement, was also taken into custody. Mr. Fredericks was sent to the hospital where every effort was made to revive the flickering candle of life.

The officer who arrested Bob Harding used very good judgement. He was a man rather advanced in years, who had seen much of life.

Before Bob was registered as a prisoner at the nearest police station, the officer had a talk with the lieutenant in charge.

"We'll have to be easy with the boy, sir," he told his superior. "There is not the least doubt in my mind but that Freericks deserved what he got."

The lieutenant nodded with an understanding smile.

Chapter 172

UNPLEASANT NEWS

PHIL GORDON had just finished his breakfast and he was on the way to the nursery to say goodby to his two children before leaving for his Chicago office. The boy greeted him with the wonted pleasant salutation, while the little girl clung to him with the affection she always showed.

The thirty minutes thus spent served to put him in the right kind of a mood. It made him forget, for a short time at least, his unhappy matrimonial entanglements.

There was no longer any doubt in his mind about what the future held in store for him.

His second wife would continue as the mistress of Oak Manor. He was bound to tolerate her because of the promise made to Alice's dying father.

And Alice seemed to make an earnest effort to live down the past. She conducted herself in a faultless manner in the house.

She took keen interest in domestic affairs, and even made a determined, though futile, attempt to win the affection of the children.

What she did when Phil's back was turned, or when he was away from home, was a horse of a different color. She was the most skilled actress and the most proficient liar in the entire State of Illinois.

That she succeeded in almost everything she undertook was perhaps due to the fact that Phil concerned himself very little about her movements.

Alice was far too shrewd to show resentment be-

cause of this. In her husband's presence she remained agreeable.

As Phil was about to leave the nursery this morning the boy clung to his hand.

"Dad, I wish you would tell me something," the little fellow said.

"What is it, Harry?" He patted the boy's head tenderly.

"Is Miss Desmond ever coming back?"

The question brought a quick flush to Gordon's care-worn face.

Countless times he had been called upon to answer it by either Harry or Phyllis. As before he said gravely:

"Miss Desmond is taking a trip for her health. I am sure she will return as soon as she is quite well again."

"But where is she?" the boy persisted.

"I—I really don't know," Gordon spoke the truth when he said that. He had not the least idea as to Miss Desmond's present whereabouts. "She may have gone abroad, Harry," he added thoughtfully.

"But you keep on being a good boy and pray every night and morning. God will hear you and He will tell Miss Desmond to hurry home."

"I pray too," little Phyllis chimed in, her lips drooping pathetically. "But I don't think God listens."

Gordon turned away to hide his moist eyes. He glanced over at Annie appealingly

"Now you must let your daddy go, children," the faithful girl said, coming forward quickly. "You know, he has lots of work at his office. To-night when he comes home he'll bring you something nice if you are good."

"Will you, dad?" from Harry and Phyllis.

"Indeed, I will," he promised, and slipped through the door.

On his way downstairs he remembered that he had not seen this morning's paper.

He was about to make an inquiry of the servants when he saw Alice coming toward him with the paper in her hand.

"Here it is, Phil," she said a trifle excitedly. "Oh!" she cried, suddenly breaking into tears. "I was never so shocked in my life. Betty got herself into a horrible mess."

"Betty?" he exclaimed. "Why, I don't believe it. There must be some mistake."

"Read and see for yourself," advised his wife.

Gordon stepped into the library, Alice following him. He unfolded the paper as he dropped into a chair.

His wife had taken a position back of him. A hoarse cry escaped his lips as he saw the big headline which read:

"Bob Harding, Young Automobile Dealer, Finds His Pretty Wife In Home of Well-known Chicago Multi-millionaire."

With his eyes wide and staring, Phil took a deep breath as if to steel himself for what was to come.

The long column giving the details of this sensational affair said in part as follows:

"The police were called to the palatial home of Mr. G. B. Fredericks on Michigan Boulevard. There they found Mr Fredericks in a precarious condition owing to a terrific beating received at the hands of Bob Harding, who recently began buying and selling a popular make of motor cars.

"They also found Mrs. Betty Harding, the latter's wife, lying in a faint on the floor. The luxuriously furnished room showed that a fierce

fight had taken place. Harding admitted beating up Mr. Fredericks. He said that he found his wife with the multi-millionaire.

"Harding was arrested and his wife is being held as a material witness as grave doubt is entertained as to the injured man's recovery. There is a possibility that the young slugger may be charged with murder.

"The police at once began an investigation which disclosed some very interesting facts.

"It was learned from an authentic source that the lovely Mrs. Harding was instrumental in bringing about the elevation of her young husband, who formerly worked in a local garage as an ordinary mechanic.

"She prevailed upon Mr. Fredericks to back her husband financially in a business venture.

"The servants who were examined, stated that their wealthy master and the youthful Mrs. Betty Harding were on terms of close friendship.

"They were seen together in a fashionable restaurant on several occasions. Why Mrs. Harding visited Mr. Fredericks' home alone and without the knowledge or consent of her husband, is a problem one's own imagination must solve.

Already society gossips are busy, for Mrs. Betty Harding was formerly Miss Betty Procter, daughter of John Procter, at one time very prominent in social and financial circles.

"Mrs. Harding is also a sister to Mrs. Philip Gordon, the owner of Oak Manor. Further developments in the case are awaited with keen interest.

"What the fate of Bob Harding will be, depends upon the condition of Mr. Fredericks. It is

generally taken for granted that the latter will refuse to prosecute his assailant in case he recovers.

"And if he does that, it must appear that Bob Harding had some justification—some good reason for beating him up in his own home.

"The entire affair is to be regretted because of Mrs. Betty Harding's family connections, which are of the best."

As Phil Gordon finished reading the newspaper article, he uttered a cry of disgust.

It was hard for him to believe that Betty had deliberately courted dishonor for the reasons stated. She was not the type of a woman to sell herself body and soul in order to elevate her husband to the rank of a business man.

And yet, grave doubt assailed him. On the face of it, Betty stood condemned.

Back of him stood Alice with a peculiar smile lurking around the corners of her mouth. This arch fiend had succeeded in her dastardly design far beyond expectation.

"It sure looks bad for Betty," Phil commented, throwing down the paper. "And those damned reporters might have omitted her family connections."

"That is the way I feel about it," Alice agreed. "What are we going to do about it, Phil?"

"God, I don't know." His teeth snapped. "If I thought Betty were guilty I would wash my hands of the whole affair right now, and let her take her medicine."

Alice was sniffing and daubed her cheeks with a fine lace handkerchief.

"Oh, I never thought that Betty could forget herself like that," she sobbed. "Why did she have to go to an old libertine like Fredericks for financial help. The world knows what kind of a beast he is."

Gordon nodded his head repeatedly.

"Yes, I know something about him," he assented. "Too bad Bob did not finish him."

With an angry snort Gordon rose. For at least ten minutes he paced the floor. With every atom of his mental strength and vision he sought to reach some sort of a conclusion.

The first question to be settled was whether Betty was guilty of deliberate misconduct with Fredericks.

There could be no doubt about that, for the latter had the reputation of being a cad of the worst type.

No woman who visited him in his own home could leave it the same as she entered it.

Finally this was settled in his mind. And he swore a soft oath.

Suddenly he whirled upon his wife.

"One thing I want you to understand right now!" he cried, his face dark with wrath. "Under no circumstances are you to meddle with this nasty affair. I forbid you to go near Betty or Bob. They have both broken the law and they must take what is coming to them.

"Now," he went on, starting to pace the floor again, "I don't blame Betty alone. That husband of hers was a fool. When I and your dad offered to put him in business, he refused because of his damnable pride.

"But he took money from an utter stranger, and without investigating what sort of a man he was. He might have known that there was some joker behind it. And what a hell of a mess he is in now."

Alice had gone over to the window.

She could have cried out with joy. Phil had said

just what she expected him to say.

She had not the least desire to meddle with the affair. As a matter of fact she was already laying plans to keep Betty away from Oak Manor.

There must be no explanations—no exchange of confidences between her and Phil.

If her husband found out that she herself had taken Betty to the Fredericks' home and introduced Betty to the old libertine, Phil would surely smell a rat.

Fate was surely playing into the fiendish woman's hands, for what came next nearly took her breath away.

"To avoid being drawn into this thing, we must leave Chicago for a monthor two," Phil said decisively. "God knows there will be plenty of publicity and scandal.

"It wouldn't surprise me to see some of those reporters come here for information. But don't you see any of them. I'll give orders that they be run off the place."

"You — you needn't worry about me meddling, dear," Alice murmured, real tears coursing down her cheeks. "I shall be guilded in this matter by your judgement. I'll do what ever you say."

Phil slanted a quick glance at his wife. But no suspicion assailed him because her audible sobs drove them away.

"I think it would be well to make preparations to leave Oak Manor at once," he suggested. "There is a train which leaves for the West about noon. We will go to San Francisco and from there to——"

"But the children?" Alice broke in questioningly, and apparently with genuine anxiety. "What about them?"

"Annie will take care of them," said Phil. "Mrs. Jennings will have complete charge of the house. I will

call up my office and inform my manager. But the most important thing is that we get away at once. I'll station one of the men at the gate with strict orders not to admit anyone to the grounds."

Alice moved oward the door, treading on air. The smile on her face was one of real pleasure.

"I can be ready in an hour, Phil," she told him, and hurried out.

Chapter 173

BOB HARDING'S END

IT WAS three days later. At the private hospital where Mr. Fredericks was being treated two trained nurses anxiously watched and waited. They had received orders from the physician in charge to mark every move and symptom of the injured man. Up to the present moment his recovery seemed still in doubt.

In falling during the terrible fight with Harding, his head had struck the corner of the table, causing concussion of the brain.

The patient appeared to be in a stupor from which nothing could wake him. Occasional groans came from his lips which indicated that in spite of his comatose state he suffered intense pain.

Toward evening his breathing became more quiet. He had fallen into a sound sleep. And while he slept the crisis passed.

The physician noticed the change for the better at the first glance. But if there still remained some doubt in his mind, it was speedily removed when Mr. Fredericks opened his eyes about six o'clock and asked for a drink of water.

"How do you feel now?" the doctor inquired, leaning over the patient.

"Alright except for a pain in my head," was the reply which came clear and distinct. "By jove I must be patched pretty, doctor," he added with a smile as he allowed his fingers to glide over his features."

"You had a very close shave, sir," said the phy-

sician respectfully. "That fellow nearly cut your face to ribbons."

"Did he?" Mr. Fredericks did not seem to take the matter very seriously. "Well, whatever Bob Harding's shortcomings may be, I'll say he is a fine scrapper. What did they do with him?"

"He is in jail where he belongs," came back. "I hope you will prosecute him to the full extent of the law."

The multi-millionaire chuckled.

"That would be playing the poor sport," he answered. "No, I am not going to prosecute him. So far as I am concerned, the incident is closed. If the police are still holding him, please say that it is my wish that he be released at once. And now let me sleep. I feel mighty tired."

When Mr. Fredericks' wish regarding Bob Harding was communicated to the police, it caused a sensation.

The chief of the police department and the county prosecutor went at once into a conference.

"I don't like the idea of allowing this young fellow to go free after coming so close to committing murder," the latter declared.

"So far as I can see there is nothing else to be done," said the police chief. "You can't send him up if Mr. Fredericks refuses to testify against him. And," he added gravely, "his wishes in the matter must be considered. Mr. Fredericks is a big man."

"Yes, you are right about that," the other admitted. "Well, I suppose we'll have to let Harding go. That will include his wife, if she is still being held."

"Naturally," remarked the chief. "I'll release them together. I hope that they may become reconciled. The poor young woman's heart is just about

broken. The guard tells me that she had been crying ever since she was locked up. I don't believe she is crooked."

The county prosecutor grinned.

"Maybe not, but she surely took a chance when she went to meet Mr. Fredericks in his own home. He is a bachelor, you know, and not very scrupulous where pretty women are concerned."

The conversation ended because the officer summoned through the silent buzzer came in for instructions.

"Let Harding and his wife go," the chief of police ordered.

"Yes, sir." The officer saluted and departed.

A minute later a heartrending scene took place in the corridor which ran through a maze of prison cells.

Betty had been released first, and she stood waiting for her husband.

Bob stepped out of his cell and saw Betty. She flew to him like a frightened bird.

"Bob — Bob!" she wailed. "Thank God we are free!"

"Don't you touch me!" he warned sullenly. "I am through with you."

"But—but, I am innocent," she protested. "If you will only let me explain. I went to the home of Mr. Fredericks to meet my sister Alice. We had agreed to —to——"

"Applesauce" her husband snarled. "Get away from me!"

Betty, weeping bitterly now, seemed determined to make Bob listen to her.

She grabbed a hold of his arm and clung to it. Her voice, shrill with excitement and pleading, could be heard everywhere.

"I wouldn't believe you on a stack of bibles, you old——" using a vile epithet. "I don't want anything further to do with you nor any of your rotten relations. I'll get a divorce and that will be the end of it. You go to your sister Alice. She and you make a good team."

With her hands pressed to her heart the poor woman tottered from the room.

She had hardly reached the sidewalk when accusing eyes began to follow her. There was a derisive yell or two, and she hurried on, hurt to the core.

Her one thought was to get out of the city as fast as she could.

Only one place could provide the refuge she craved, and that place was Oak Manor. The only person who could help her was her sister Alice.

Her sister could explain how she came to be found in Mr. Fredericks' home alone.

And so with a heavy heart, though still hopeful, Mrs. Harding set out for Oak Manor. A taxi made the trip in an hour.

But as the chauffeur was about to pass through the high gate, he was stopped by one of the Gordon servants.

The latter barred the way and assumed a threatening attitude.

"You can't drive in!" he shouted.

"Why can't I?" the taxi driver demanded. "This young lady——"

"I don't care who is inside of that cab," the other interrupted quickly. "You can't drive in, and that settles it."

Betty left the taxi to talk to the man.

"I am Mrs. Gordon's sister," she said. "I am sure there must be same mistake. Won't you let us pass, please."

The man gave Betty an impudent stare.

"Yes, I know who you are," he grinned insultingly. "I saw your picture in the newspaper. Well, take it from me, you are not wanted here. I have orders to keep you out."

Poor Betty's second appeal fell upon deaf ears. Blushing with shame she was compelled to listen to several other insulting remarks.

"You might as well beat it back where you come from," the man ended. "Mr. and Mrs. Gordon are not not at home. They have gone on a long trip somewhere —either to Europe or Africa, I don't know which. They won't be back for at least two months."

With her heart sick within her, Betty turned away. There was not the least doubt in her mind but that she had been listening to the truth.

It was just like Alice to run away and leave her in the lurch. But she could not bring herself to believe that Phil had gone, too.

He had always been her friend and warm champion. And then it occurred to her what a proud man her brother-in-law always had been. He abhorred scandal.

Slowly the conviction gained ground in her mind that even Phil Gordon was no longer her friend and champion.

His sudden leaving made that painfully plain.

"Alright," she said, choeking back a sob, "if I am not wanted here, I don't want to come."

She said a few words to the chauffeur, entered the taxi, and was driven back to the city. But what a frightful ride it was!

Not if she lived a thousand years would she forget it. For during that drive she realized that she was an outcast. Her own husband had repudiated her be-

cause he believed her guilty of a horrible thing.

Her own sister and her husband had left the country to avoid her.

The newspapers had printed her photograph, thus drawing the attention of the entire city and perhaps the country, to the fact that she was a dishonored woman.

"Oh, God!" she moaned. "If I could only die!"

But death does not come when human beings suddenly tired of life wish for it.

And Betty Harding, in spite of her dreadful predicament, still clung to a small fragment of hope.

One more appeal she must make to her husband. Perhaps after he had time to think the matter over he would see his mistake.

She ordered the chauffeur to drive to her flat. With her heart beating like a triphammer she ascended the stairs.

She was not surprised that the door stood partly ajar. Perhaps Bob had forgotten to close it as he came home.

For a long moment she stood in the small living room and listened. Not the slightest noise came. Once she thought she heard someone stirring in the kitchen.

"Bob!" she called, afraid of the sound of her own voice. "Bob!"

Not receiving a reply, Betty made a quick search of the other two rooms. Her husband could not be found.

Then it occurred to her that he might have gone to his place of business.

As the distance was not great, she decided to walk. Within a block of the store she suddenly became aware of a commotion ahead of her.

A man ran out on the sidewalk and shouted something to a group of pedestrians, then quickly he disap-

peared.

Something impelled Betty to hasten. A vage feeling of dread had taken possession of her.

But even before she could reach her husband's store, several men carried something limp across the sidewalk and deposited it into an automobile.

The car sped away almost instantly.

With her breath coming in short gasps, Betty entered the store. It was deserted

The mechanics employed in the repair department, having never met her, did not know that she was Mrs. Bob Harding. They stared at her, and she saw at once by the look in their eyes that something terrible must have happened.

"I am Mrs. Harding," she announced, trying to speak calmly. "Where is my husband."

The men seemed reluctant to answer.

"You tell her, Bill," one man said to the other.

"You tell her yourself," the other countered.

"Please tell me," Betty begged pitifully. "Has—has something happened to him?"

"They—they just took him to the hospital," one of the men finally found courage to say. "He—he hurt himself with his gun."

Instantly Betty surmised the horrible truth.

"He—he shot himself?" she gasped.

The men nodded.

She began to stagger and several of the men rushed to her aid. They led her into the office where she fell, half fainting, into a chair.

As her dilating eyes rested for a moment on the desk before her, she saw a sealed envelope lying on it.

"For my wife, Mrs. Betty Harding," the inscription read.

How Betty managed to tear open that envelope

she could never tell. But she did it. With constantly increasing terror gripping her, she read:

"Dear Betty:

"I have not the courage to go on. Life is not worth the trouble without you. In passing over to the other world, I leave no regrets. I hope you will continue to find pleasure with such men as Fredericks.

"But you did something I thought you incapable of when you lowered yourself to the extent of becoming that man's mistress.

"What a fool I was to think that you could be happy with me, a poor automobile mechanic. I made a mistake in allowing myself to fall in love with you, I made a bigger mistake when I permitted you to become my wife.

"Whatever is left after you settle with Fredericks, is yours. Now, please understand that I am not blaming you. Women raised in luxury hate to be poor.

"But I would have liked it better if you had played square with me and told me that you wanted to be free. To deceive me like you did, is something I can never forgive. Don't come to weep over my grave. I want to rest in peace."

"Bob."

Betty dropped the letter because her nerveless fingers could not hold it.

Like an automaton she rose and confronted the man who stood lined up against the wall.

"Take—take me to—to the hospital—where he

is," she gasped brokenly.

They led her gently away and lifted her in the car that was to carry her to the hospital. Still a faint glimmer of hope remained.

Bob might not be dead, but only wounded.

But as she stepped into the ward where his rigid form lay stretched out on a little white bed, she saw one of the physicians draw a sheet over the face that would never smile nor frown again.

Bob Harding had just breathed his last.

Chapter 174

IN NEW YORK

A WEEK had passed. To chronicle all that happened in that short week would be impossible. Bob Harding had been laid away in his grave. There were no mourners except a few of his friends and the wretched little woman who had become a widow. Mr. Fredericks sent a magnificent floral piece which Betty refused to put on the grave.

They met only once, and that was to settle what business remained to be transacted.

Not a single word did she speak to the man. The attorney she had engaged for the occasion, did all the talking. It was found that, owing to Mr. Fredericks' generosity, the young widow Harding was far from being poor.

But Betty had sworn not to touch a single penny of the money which had blood on it.

Every dollar of it she turned over to the Associated Charities with the proviso that it was to be used to take care of orphaned children exclusively.

The newspapers had another inning, for they printed long columns about the Bob Harding suicide.

"Tragic sequel to the Fredericks-Mrs. Harding episode," was the headlines which nearly drove Betty frantic.

Again her picture appeared, this time in mourning dress. Without being aware of it some impudent reporter had snapped it as she was about to leave the cemetery.

Betty passed through a veritable hell during the

time she still remained in Chicago. Everywhere she went people pointed their fingers at her and snickered.

Children whom she met on the sidewalk, stepped aside with awed, frightened faces. She did not make another attempt to get in touch with her sister Alice and Phil Gordon.

The only move in that direction was to ascertain beyond doubt that they had gone on a two month's trip.

Embittered and determined to fight her own way through life somewhere else, she boarded a train for New York. And the first thing she decided upon was to go back to her maiden name of Betty Procter.

But there was so little she could do. She had never been much of a housekeeper. She could not do office work.

The experience she had in a Detroit department store had sickened her. She was somewhat of an artist, for her association with Waterford Burley in the same city had been beneficial.

But she still lacked the knowledge and skill demanded of an artist such as large commercial houses or publishing companies employ.

She had always cherished the desire to go on the stage. At college she had been always at the head of the dramatic class. And she was an unusually talented dancer.

Now that she had no one to consider but her own self, she had at least the satisfaction and the privilege of following her inclination.

Betty looked bewitchingly lovely in her somber black mourning dress. She was well aware that every male traveler stared at her admiringly. She resented it and it pleased her both.

For she began to realize that there must be something out of the ordinary about her personality to make

men admire her so openly.

One traveling man, more daring than a number of others, took the courage to speak to Betty.

"I bet you are headed for a fat movie contract," he said as he dropped on the seat beside her with an easy smile. "Well, I hope you get it. You surely have the looks. If I were Griffith or Lasky, I'd sign you up for life and let you name your own salary."

For a moment Betty felt tempted to rebuke the fellow.

Her lips were already half parted to utter the words that were to send him packing, but his good-natured smile disarmed her.

"I suppose," he went on with genuine sympathy, "you lost someone near and dear to you, sister. Well, we all have to go through that. I had an old dad who was the best pal any boy ever had. When he passed away, I thought I could not live on with him. Did you lose your dad, too?"

Fearing that the man might become inquisitive if she told him that she had just buried her husband under such tragic circumstances, she nodded.

"Yes, I lost my dad," she murmured, her big eyes filling with quick tears. "He was to me what your dad was to you. Had he lived I would not be on my way to New York now to find a position."

The man looked her over curiously.

"A position?" he cried. "Then you are not a movie actress?"

"No, I am not," she answered.

Again the man surveyed her critically. There was something about this young woman that appealed to him.

It might have been the constant quiver of her lips, or the big, tear-filled eyes. But it is a safer guess to say

that it was her strange, compelling charm.

And charming is the adjective that fit Betty like a glove. She was timid and yet resourceful. She was self-assured without appearing bold.

She had a smile that allured without promising.

Her whole attitude was that of a woman chastened by misfortune and hardened by the blows of cruel fate. The change which had come over her within the last few weeks was all in her favor.

"No, I am not a movie actress," she repeated a little thoughtfully. "However, I would not be averse to accepting such a position if I were qualified, which, unfortunately, I am not. I shall probably try my luck on the stage. I can dance and I can act—that is," she added with a smile, "I think I can."

"We can do a whole lot of things if we have to," he returned. "But, frankly I would not advise you to try for the movies unless you have some good backing and plenty of talent."

"Why not?" she queried.

"I'll tell you why," came back promptly. "I have been in Hollywood several times, and what I saw there convinced me that the girl who is crazy to go into the movies in most cases comes back home bitterly disappointed. They can't stand waiting day after day with no money coming in. And when they do get the first chance as an extra, there is little pay in it and much abuse."

As the man went on describing Hollywood and the other places where films are made, Betty listened with rapt attention.

He spoke convincingly and without bluster. Nor was there anything about his demeanor that was in the least offensive.

He was a perfect gentleman in his conduct.

Continued in next number

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Only these Cards and Nothing Else can be thy Savior

were his continual thoughts. Under the impulse of this inspiration he informed the chief of the magical power of these cards, which in possession of an enemy would cause dire disaster to his family as well as himself. Thoroughly frightened the chief gave this treasure to Korn and escorted him to the seacoast far from his place of captivity. After various wanderings and adventures he arrived at the German colony Kameron, where he secured a position on board a Hamburg merchant ship; and through these events we became possessed of the *Genuine Cards*, the handwritten interpretation and instructions how to use them.

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